

**Gulf SEDAR Committee Report
October 25, 2021
Dale Diaz, Chair**

The Committee adopted the agenda (**Tab I, No. 1**) with the Addition of “Fisheries Closures” to Other Business. The Committee approved the minutes (**Tab I, No. 2**) of the October 2020 meeting as written. Mr. Ryan Rindone provided a short overview of the action guide and next steps (**Tab I, No. 3**). Dr. Carrie Simmons reviewed the Gulf stock assessment issues brought before the SEDAR Steering Committee during its October 13, 2021, virtual meeting (**Tab I, No. 4**). She noted a letter sent to the SEFSC to conduct a data triage for the tilefishes complex, which the SEFSC replied they could not conduct without the effort occupying a stock assessment slot and suggested that it might require a Research Track. Given the need to complete this data triage prior to moving forward with a future tilefish assessment, the Gulf Council will request moving the assessment to 2025 in order to accommodate the timeliness of this request and benefit all parties involved. Gulf Council staff plan to work with SEFSC staff and the SSC to determine if a data poor assessment can be conducted. Concurrently, an operational assessment of cobia has been moved up to 2024 in the slot vacated by the tilefish complex.

Dr. Simmons noted, based on the recent September 2021 SSC meeting when gag stock assessment results were discussed, it became apparent that the SEDAR Steering Committee members would benefit from understanding where in the process they were with regard to NOAA’s *Recommended Use of the Current Gulf of Mexico Surveys of Marine Recreational Fishing in Stock Assessments*, published July 2019 and presented to the SEDAR Steering Committee in August 2019. The Southeast Regional Office stated that a meeting was being organized by the NOAA Office of Science and Technology to try and resolve data discrepancies for all state surveys, and for all species for which those surveys cover.

A Council member asked that a notice of the SEDAR 77 assessment for hammerhead sharks be sent to the permitted shark fishermen in the Gulf, and that the Council send out the Something’s Fishy tool for that assessment to collect anecdotal data about the fishery ahead of that data workshop. Dr. Simmons noted that sending a notice to those shark fishermen could be done pending receiving the requisite contact information for those permit holders. Council staff will continue to work with Atlantic HMS leadership to determine how they can best use the Something’s Fishy tool for the SEDAR 77 Data Workshop.

A Council member asked about the progress being made by the shrimp effort working groups, and the type of assessment approach that is being expected from the SEFSC for assessing Gulf penaeid shrimp species. Dr. John Walter provided an overview on the status of the working groups. He noted that the SEFSC was uncertain about the assessment approach that would be employed, and how the input from the shrimp effort working group would be incorporated in such an assessment at this time until the Council, in coordination with industry, decides on a new shrimp effort data collection method. The Council member asked that the Council work with the SEFSC to explore how best to finalize the working groups results for incorporation into the upcoming stock assessment process.

Mr. Ryan Rindone reviewed the Gulf SEDAR schedule (**Tab I, No. 5**). A Council member asked that the Committee wait until after the gag and greater amberjack discussions during the Reef Fish Committee before making a recommendation about when to conduct research track assessments for those species in 2025. A Committee member added that it was important to ensure that the greater amberjack absolute abundance study was completed prior to the research track for that assessment getting underway. A Council member asked about the recent closures for some species in the Gulf. The SERO noted that these closures would be discussed during the Reef Fish Committee discussion of recent reef fish landings data.

Under Other Business, a Council member noted that the SEDAR 72 stock assessment for gag shows that the stock is overfished and undergoing overfishing, and that depending on certain criteria used to define the stock, a fishery closure may be necessary to rebuild the stock. The Council member added that closing a fishery would result in extreme negative social and economic effects, but also would remove the ability to collect age and length composition data from the directed fleets. A Committee member echoed the sentiments of the Council member, noting specific concurrent issues with a lack of available data for red snapper in the South Atlantic. The Committee member echoed the desire to avoid closing a fishery as part of a rebuilding plan if at all possible. A Council member asked, in the case of gag, whether the data collected by the State of Florida under its State Reef Fish Survey (SRFS) were being considered. A Committee member replied that the discussion about the SRFS data on gag were being discussed as a separate issue.

This concludes my report.